SPECIAL EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

July 2004

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Office of Public Instruction

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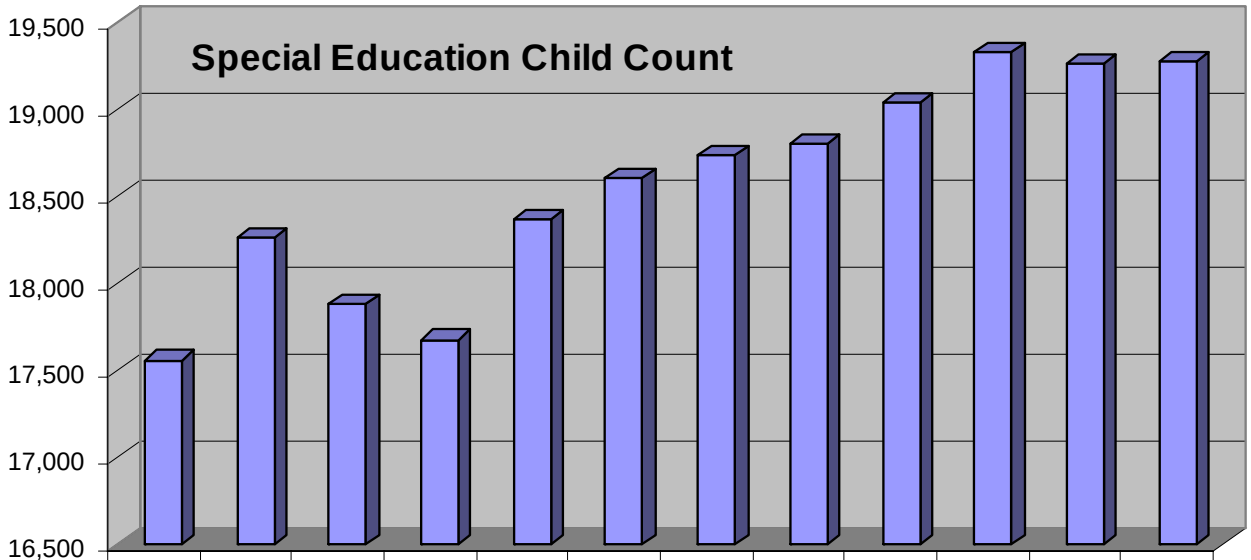
Population of Students Served

Public schools must make available special education and related services to all IDEA-eligible students with disabilities beginning at age three and through age 18. Services to students 19, 20, and 21 are permissive. That is, the decision to serve 19, 20 and 21-year-old students is determined by the policies of the school district board of trustees [20-5-101(3), MCA, and ARM 10.16.3122(2)].

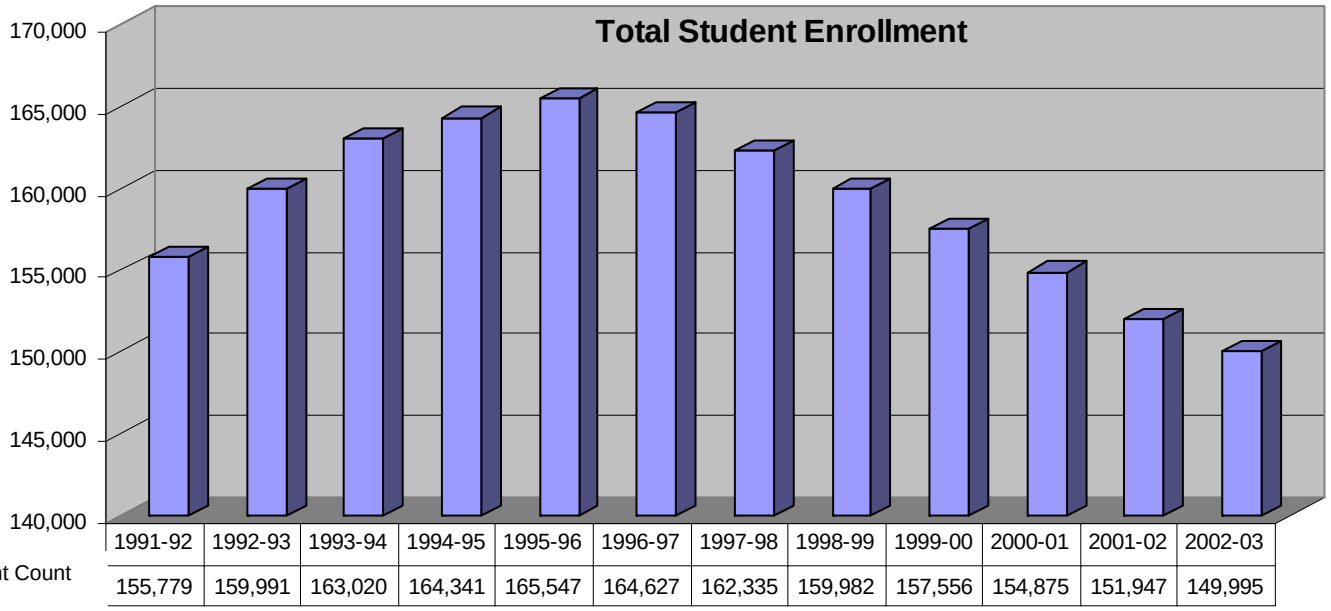


	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Student Count	17,560	18,258	17,882	17,679	18,364	18,600	18,735	18,797	19,039	19,330	19,262	19,269

Source: Child Count Data Files (opi_adm_003/vol1/Access/Division/Speical Education/Child Count/ChildCount91-01 and Access on Opihlnntprd3/Access/Division/SpecialEducation/SQLCC

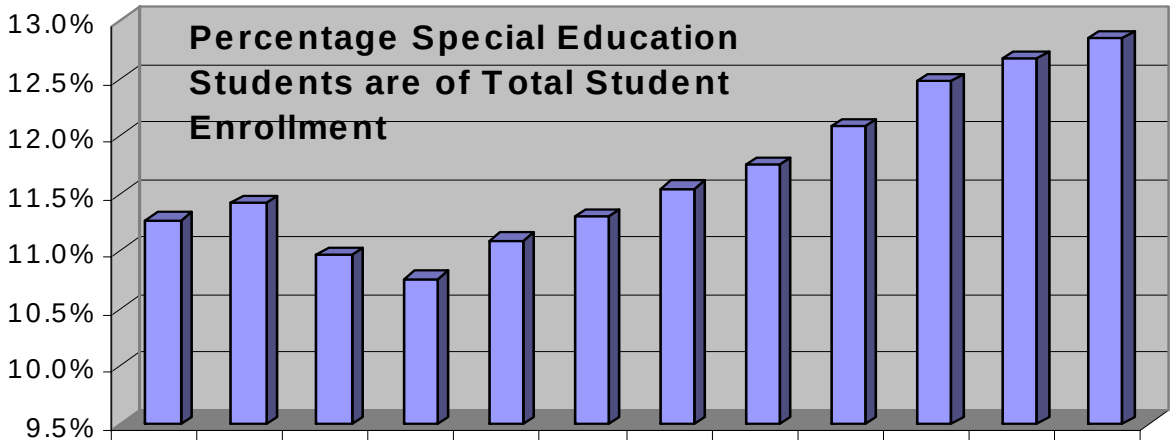
Students with disabilities receive a wide range of services, including individualized instruction, assistive technology, and related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and/or transition services. Both the type and the extent of services a student receives are individually determined based on the educational needs of the student.

Montana's Child Count (term used for the collection of student special education data) grew slightly, but steadily, between the school year 1995-96 and the school year 2000-01. There was a small decrease in Child Count during 2001-02 and the count held steady for 2002-03. These increases in Child Count occurred at the same time that total student enrollment declined. Because of declining enrollment at the same time special education Child Count has grown, the proportion of students served by special education has increased over the years.



	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Student Count	155,779	159,991	163,020	164,341	165,547	164,627	162,335	159,982	157,556	154,875	151,947	149,995

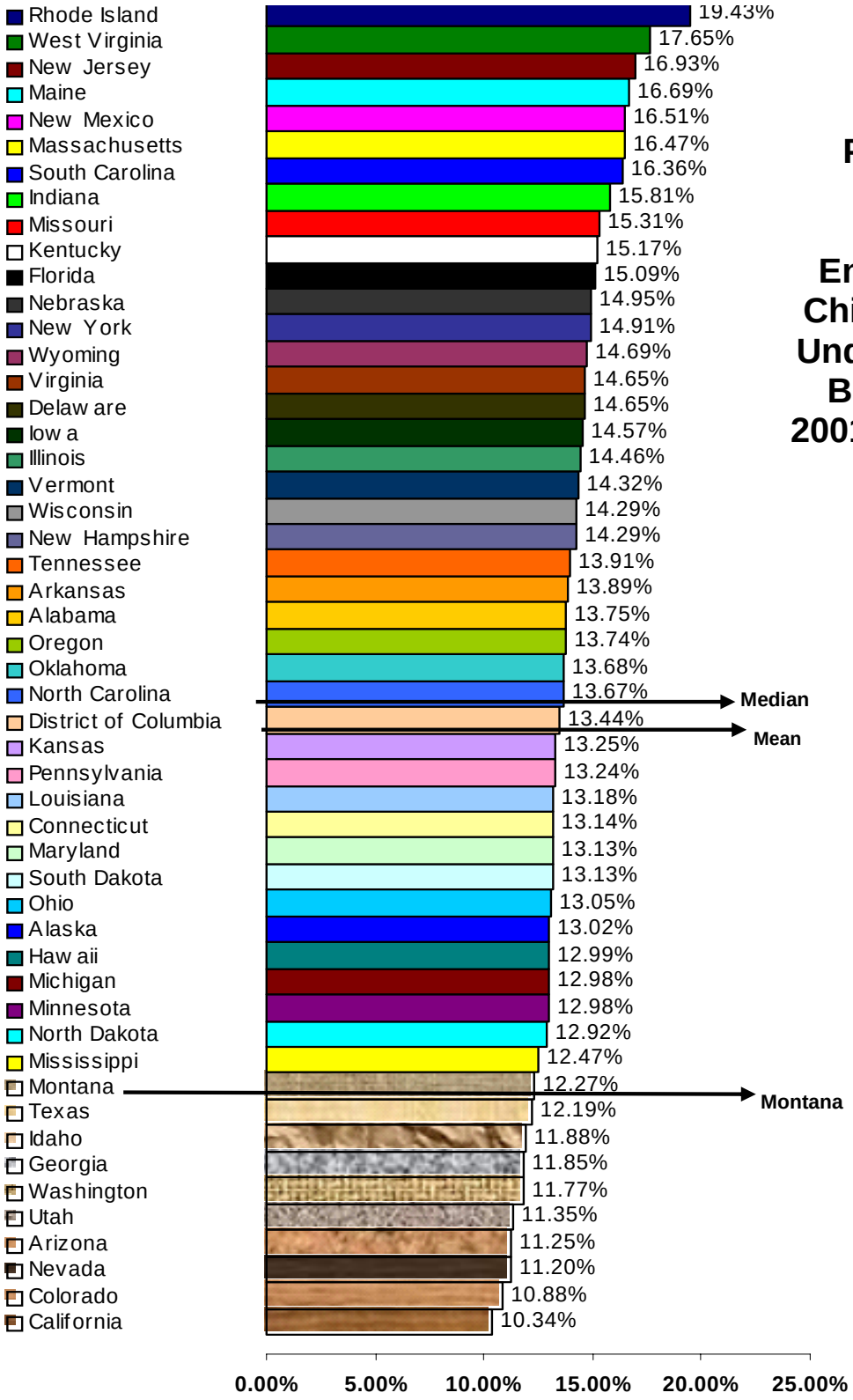
Source: Montana Public School Enrollment Data, Fall 2002-2003 (Published yearly by OPI)



1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
11.3%	11.4%	11.0%	10.8%	11.1%	11.3%	11.5%	11.7%	12.1%	12.5%	12.7%	12.8%

The percentage is calculated by dividing the special education student count for the year by the total student enrollment for the same year.

However, Montana still ranks below the mean in the percentage of students served under IDEA according to the Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to Congress.



National Percentage (Based on Student Enrollment) of Children Served Under IDEA, Part B, During the 2001-2002 School Year

Mean is the average percentage (13.35%). Median is the middle point of the chart.

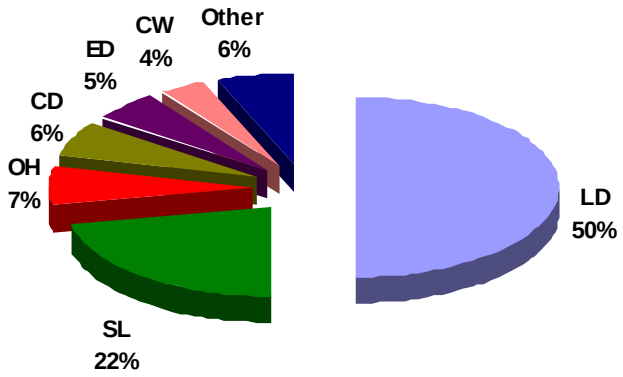
Source: Twenty-fourth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Enrollment Data - Table A-388, Number of Children Served Under IDEA – Table A-1)

Student Identification by Disability

Approximately 50 percent of all students receiving special education services have their primary disability identified as learning disabled and 22 percent of students have speech-language impairment identified as their primary disability. These two categories represent almost three-quarters of all students receiving special education services.

There has been a dramatic increase in the category of other health impairment. The number of students in Montana identified in this disability category grew from 177 students in 1989-90, to 1,356 students reported in 2002-03. A U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, policy letter issued in the early 1990s made it possible for children with attention deficit disorder to qualify for special education under the category of other health impairment and federal regulations finalized in March of 1999 listed attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in the definition for other health impairment.

Disabilities by Percentage of Total Number of Students with Disabilities – 2002-2003 School Year



DISABILITY ABBREVIATIONS And Student Count for the 2002-03 school year

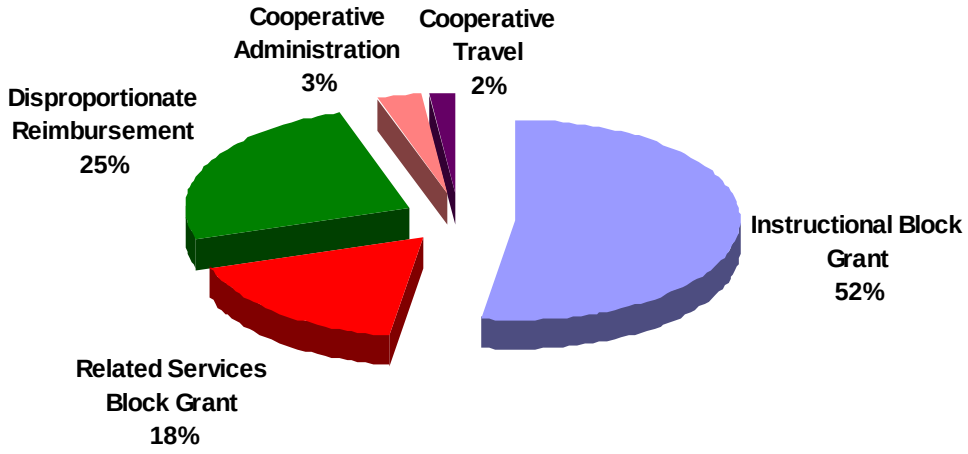
LD	Learning Disability - 9,613
SL	Speech-Language Impairment - 4,237
OH	Other Health Impairment - 1,356
CD	Cognitive Delay - 1,152
ED	Emotional Disturbance - 1,012
CW	Child with Disabilities - 707
Other –	Total - 1,192
MD	Multiple Disabilities - 539
AU	Autism - 242
HI	Hearing Impairment - 132
OI	Orthopedic Impairment - 81
TB	Traumatic Brain Injury - 72
VI	Visual Impairment - 65
DE	Deafness - 54
DB	Deaf-Blindness - 7

Source: Special Education Child Count conducted on December 2, 2002
OpihInntprd3\Access\Division/SpecialEducation/SQLCC

The number of students identified as having autism has increased substantially over the last 10 years. While autism is considered a low-incidence disability category, the cost to address the needs of a child with autism is high. Nationally, the number of students ages 6-21 who were reported under this category rose by 1,354.3 percent, from 5,415 students in 1992 to 78,749 students in 2001 (Source: Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Pg II-20). In the first year (1991-92) that autism was identified as a specific disability by Montana, two students were identified. The following year, 20 students were identified as having autism. In 2002-03, there were 242 students identified as having autism - a 17.5 percent increase from the previous year.

Funding Distribution
State Special Education Appropriation for 2003-2004 School Year

Montana's special education funding structure distributes state appropriations in accordance with 20-9-321, MCA, based on a combination of total school enrollment and expenditures. Seventy percent of the appropriation is distributed through block grants (instructional block grants and related services block grants), which are based on enrollment. Twenty-five percent is distributed through reimbursement for disproportionate costs, which is based on expenditures. The remaining 5 percent is distributed to special education cooperatives to cover costs related to travel and administration.



State Entitlement for 2003-2004 School Year

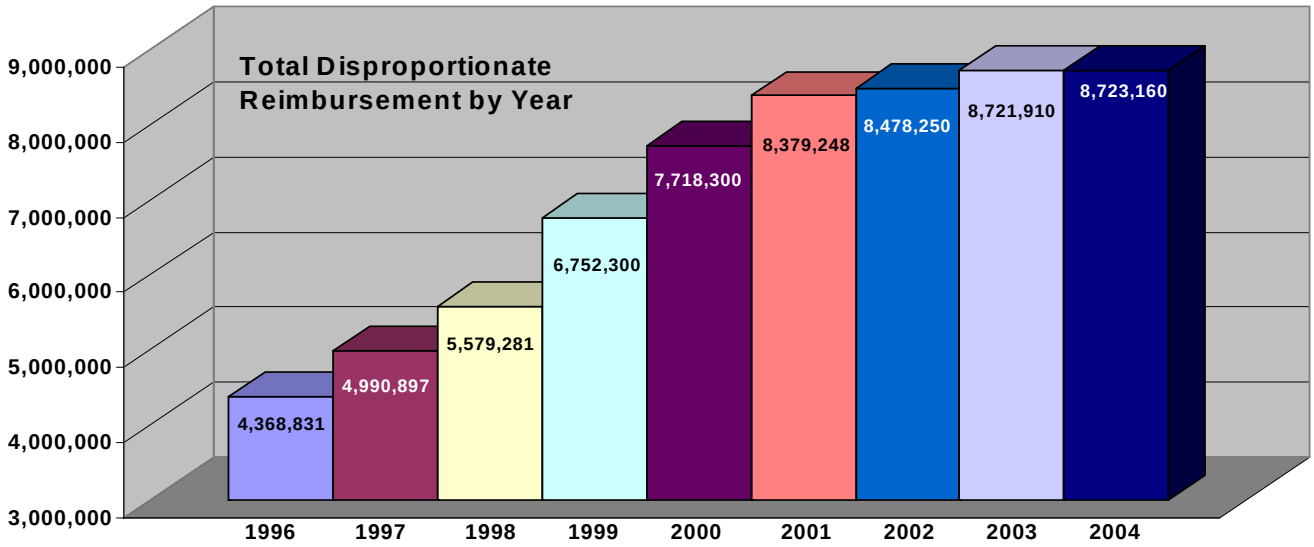
Instructional Block Grant		$18,324,690
Related Services Block Grant		$6,108,230
Disproportionate Reimbursement		$8,723,160
Cooperative Administration		$1,046,779
Cooperative Travel		$697,853
	TOTAL	$34,900,712

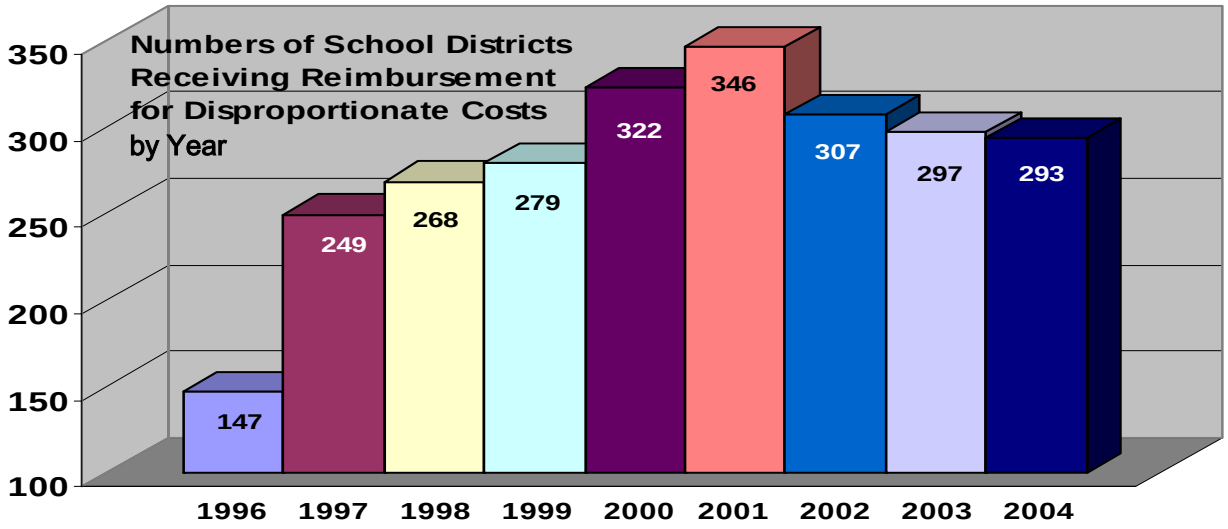
Note: The total payment to schools is less than the total appropriation. A small amount of the appropriation is withheld to compensate for adjustments to ANB.

Source: Final Special Education Cooperative Allowable Cost Funding Report (Prd\Maefairs\MaefairsCode.mde, rptSpecialEducationCoop, dated 7/28/03) and Final Special Education Summary (Prd\Maefairs/MaefairsCode.mde, rptSpecialEducationSummary, dated 7/28/03)

Growth in Reimbursement of Disproportionate Costs

The proportion of the total state appropriation distributed in the form of reimbursement for disproportionate costs grew both in total dollars and in the number of districts receiving reimbursement for disproportionate costs through FY 2001. The funding for disproportionate reimbursement was revised with FY 2002 to fix the proportion of funds distributed under reimbursement for disproportionate costs and shift funding back to instructional and related services block grants. Today, any increase in funds distributed for purposes of reimbursement of disproportionate costs is due to an increase in overall appropriations for special education.

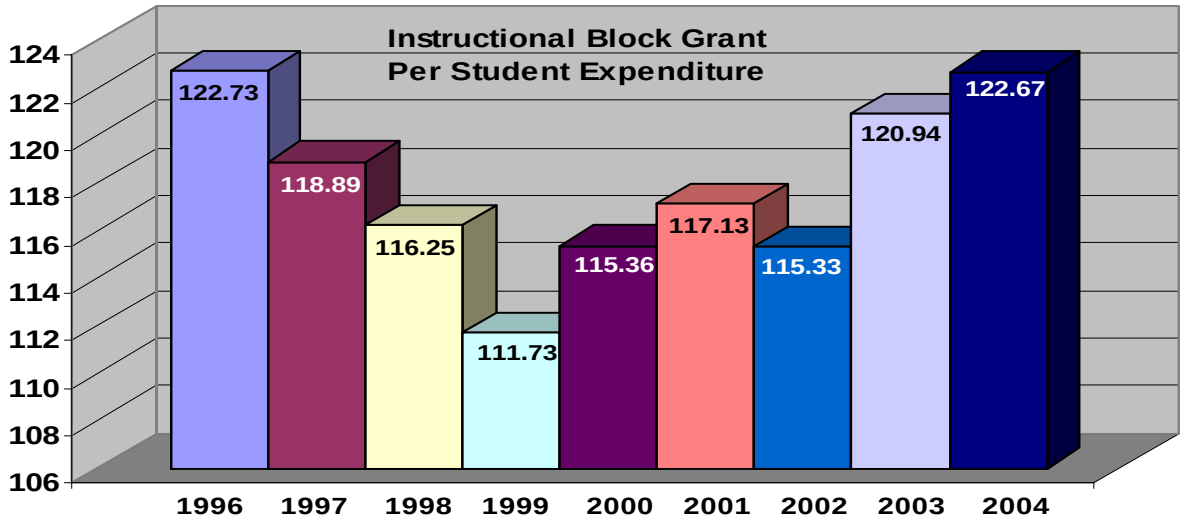


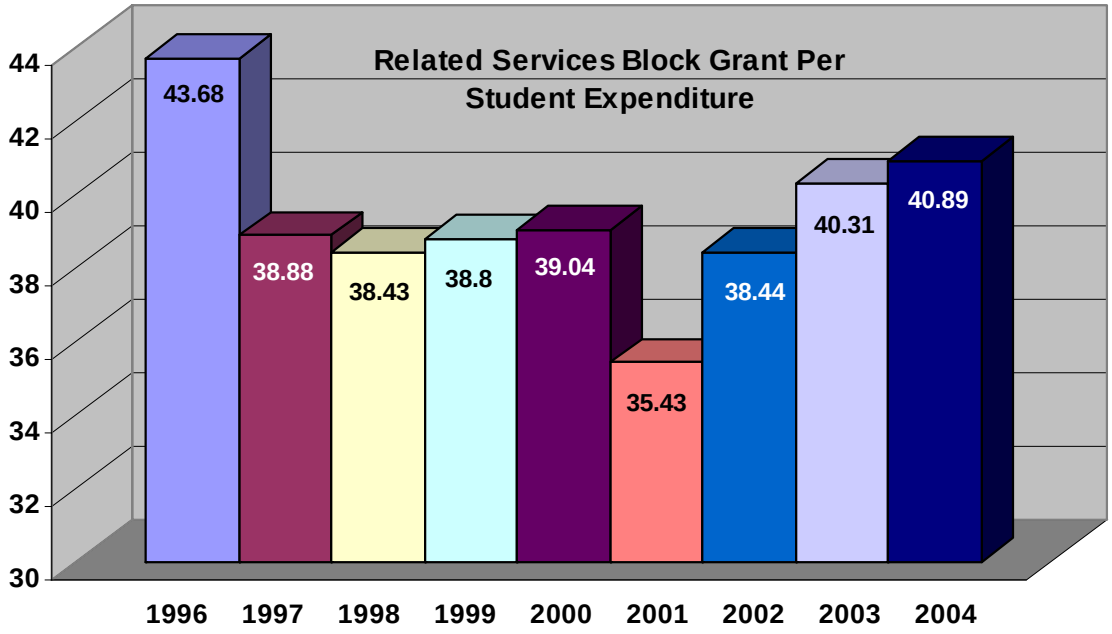


Source: T:\data\Le_reim; Special Education Summary for 2001-02 and 2002-03 (Prd\Maefairs\maefairsCode.mde rptSpecialEducationSummary, dated 7/28/03); Special Education Cooperative Allowable Cost Funding for 2001-02 and 2002-03 (Prd\Maefairs/MaefairsCode.mde rptSpecialEducation Coop, dated 7/28/03)

Instructional Block Grants and Related Services Block Grants

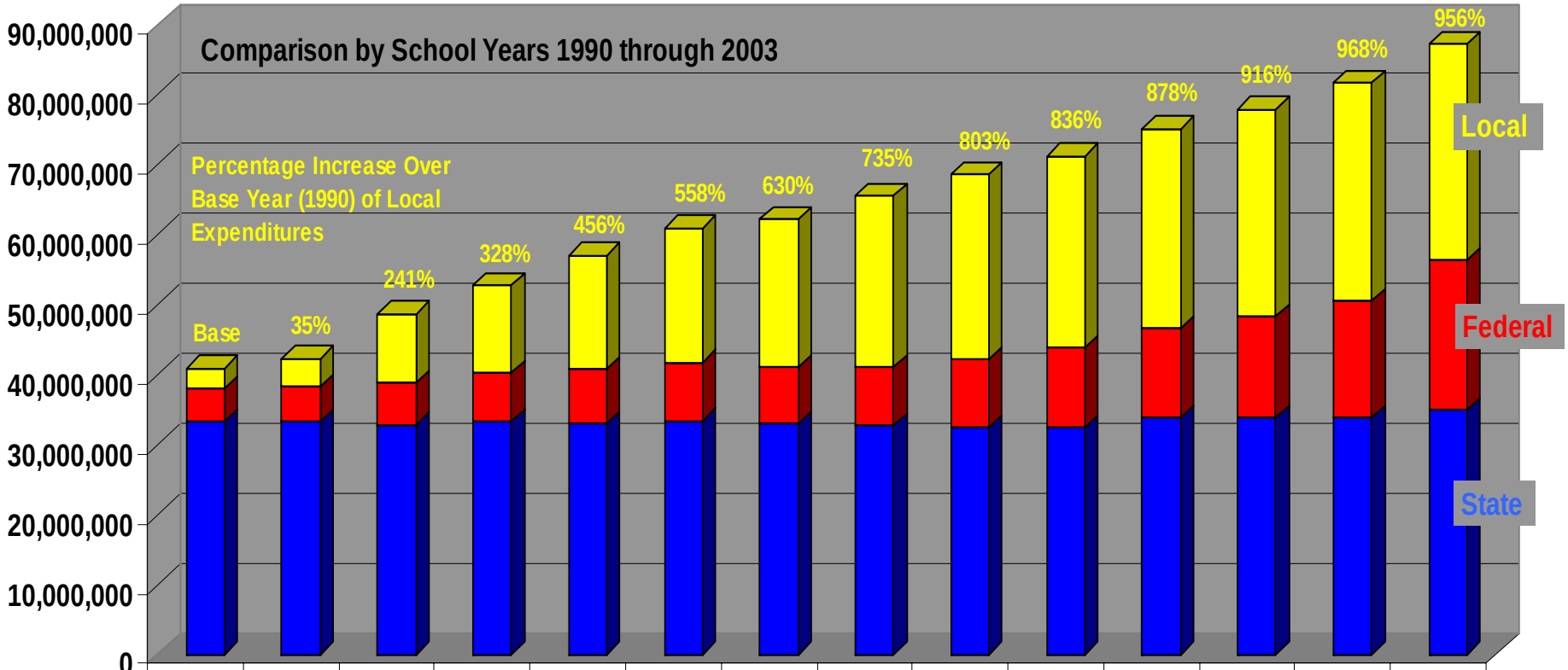
With the limit on the proportion of funds distributed in the form of reimbursement for disproportionate costs, the block grant rates (per student expenditure) are no longer declining and are instead increasing along with increases in state appropriations. This will positively impact both schools and special education cooperatives. State special education cooperatives are significantly affected since they are not eligible for reimbursement for disproportionate costs and the related services block grant is the primary source of funding. This shift is supporting the structure of the funding model's emphasis on block grant distribution of funds.





Source: T:\data\Rageyrs; Special Education Summary for 2001-02, 2002-03 & 2003-04 (Prd\Maefairs\maefairsCode.mde rptSpecialEducationSummary); Special Education Cooperative Allowable Cost Funding for 2001-02, 2002-03 & 2003-04 (Prd\Maefairs/MaefairsCode.mde rptSpecialEducation Coop)

Expenditures of State, Federal, and Local Funds
Comparison by Year



	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Totals	40,939,452	42,333,419	48,785,181	52,788,381	57,109,584	60,979,741	62,340,088	65,502,661	68,580,594	71,278,260	75,222,537	78,021,409	81,725,803	87,223,792
Local $$	2,916,889	3,949,067	9,946,202	12,472,401	16,221,437	19,188,382	21,281,834	24,347,590	26,348,507	27,305,512	28,523,786	29,649,483	31,160,854	30,800,967
Federal $$	4,660,917	5,050,519	5,993,182	7,010,146	7,830,884	8,363,021	8,072,103	8,473,920	9,799,408	11,452,352	12,798,901	14,459,002	16,654,650	21,539,091
State $$	33,361,646	33,333,833	32,845,797	33,305,834	33,057,263	33,428,338	32,986,151	32,681,151	32,432,679	32,520,396	33,899,850	33,912,924	33,910,299	34,883,734

Note: This table may differ from previously released versions. Amounts are changed to reflect adjustments to trustees' financial summaries submitted by school districts.

Source: State - Special education payment amount provided by OPI accounting, which does not include reversion; Federal - Expenditures provided by OPI accounting (SABHRS year-end report); Local - Expenditures from board of trustees' financial summaries for special education allowable costs are reduced by the state payment amount to come up with the local amount.

Federal

The growth in expenditures for special education has become an issue of national significance. On a national level, attention has been focused on the proportion of federal support for special education. The current federal share of special education costs (national average) is approximately 20 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure. Although this is a greater proportion of the national average per pupil expenditure than in the past, the proportion remains about one-half the 40 percent level promised by Congress when the special education laws were first passed in the mid 1970s. If Congress were to fund special education at 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure, the level of funding would cover between 50 and 60 percent of Montana's special education allowable costs. This is due to relatively lower costs for special education in Montana, and the way the national average per pupil expenditure is calculated.

In Montana, approximately $87.2 million were spent on special education in the 2002-2003 school year. This is a significant increase from the 1989-90 school year when approximately $41 million of state, federal and local funds were spent on special education. Much of this increase can be attributed to inflation and an increase in the number of students served by special education. In fiscal year 2003, approximately $21.5 million of the $87.2 million Montana spent on special education came from federal revenue sources.

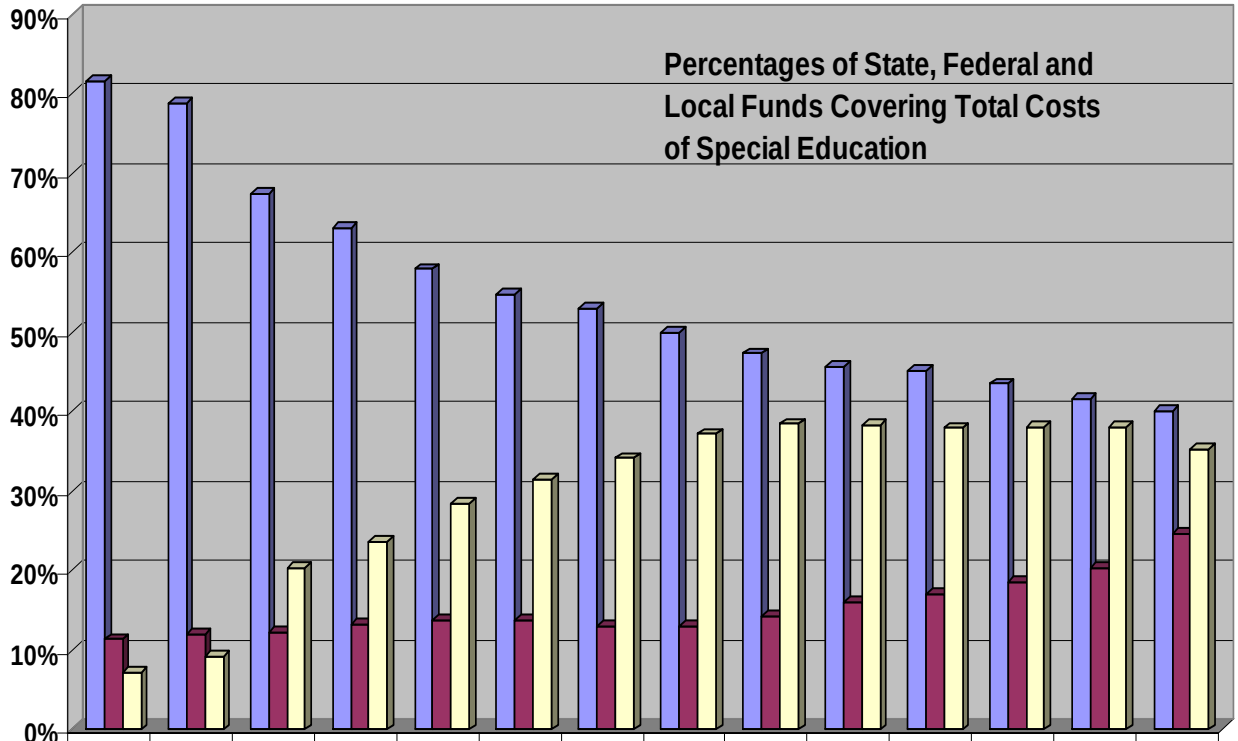
State

State appropriations for special education have fallen far short of the growth in costs. During a period of increased costs, coupled with flat state funding throughout the 1990s, the state share of the total costs of special education has slipped from approximately 81.5 percent in school year 1989-1990 to approximately 40 percent in school year 2002-03.

Local

By far the greatest share of funding of the increased costs of special education has come from the local general fund budgets. Local school districts have absorbed the increase in costs of special education by increasing their contribution from approximately $3 million in 1989-1990 to approximately $31 million for the 2002-03 school year. This represents an increase of nearly 1000 percent in local district contribution for special education. In 2002-03, for the first time since 1989-90, the local expenditures for special education funding decreased. This likely occurred because state funding increased slightly (3 percent) and federal funding increased by 29 percent.

For purposes of this discussion, "local funds" means special education expenditures from district revenues other than state and federal funds that are specifically earmarked for special education. These "local funds" would have otherwise been available for general education. This shift in allocation of local funds has been a serious concern for schools and parents and has created an atmosphere of competition for dollars.

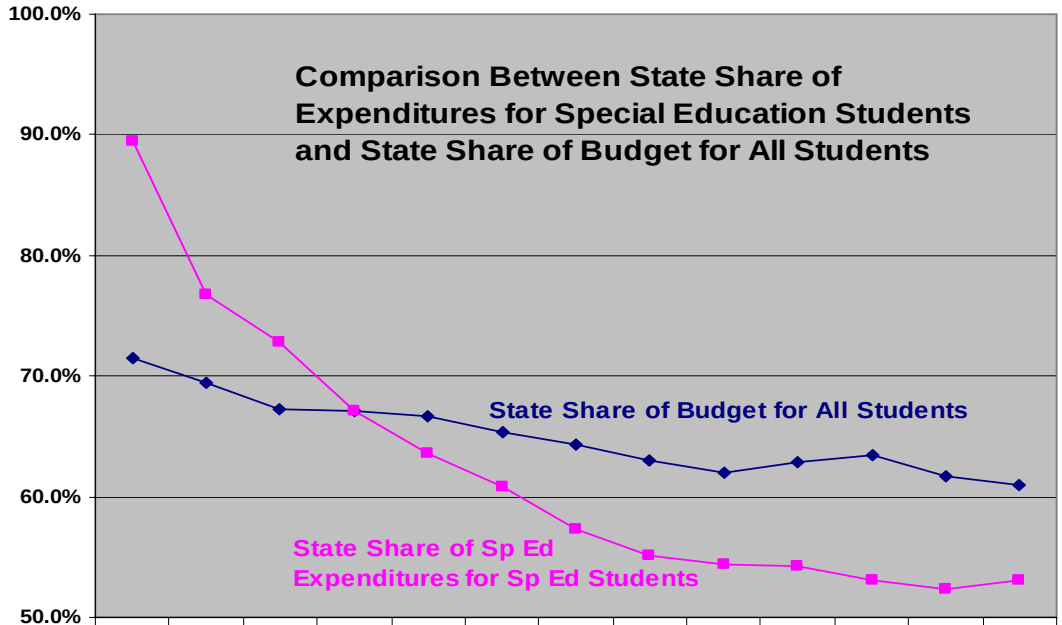


	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
State	81.49%	78.74%	67.33%	63.09%	57.88%	54.82%	52.91%	49.89%	47.29%	45.62%	45.07%	43.47%	41.49%	39.99%
Federal	11.38%	11.93%	12.28%	13.28%	13.71%	13.71%	12.95%	12.94%	14.29%	16.07%	17.01%	18.53%	20.38%	24.69%
Local	7.12%	9.33%	20.39%	23.63%	28.40%	31.47%	34.14%	37.17%	38.42%	38.31%	37.92%	38.00%	38.13%	35.31%

As a result of increased costs in special education during a time when state and federal funding has remained relatively flat, the proportion of "local funds" supporting costs of special education has grown dramatically while the proportion of state funds has declined.

The General Fund

Another way of studying the effects of relatively flat state funding of special education is to compare the percentage of school district general fund expenditures from earmarked state special education funds. State general fund support for special education costs has slipped from approximately 89 percent in the 1990-91 school year to approximately 52 percent in the 2001-02 school year. In the meantime, the state support of the general fund budget for all students has slipped from approximately 71 percent in the 1990-91 school year to approximately 62 percent in the 2001-02 school year. At one time, the state share of special education general fund expenditures was 18 percent higher than the state share of general fund budget for general education. Today, the state share of special education expenditures is approximately 8 percent lower than the state share of general fund budget for general education.



	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
State Share of Budget for All Students	71.4%	69.5%	67.3%	67.2%	66.7%	65.4%	64.4%	63.0%	62.0%	62.9%	63.5%	61.6%	60.9%
State Share of Sp Ed Expenditures for Sp Ed Students	89.4%	76.8%	72.8%	67.1%	63.5%	60.8%	57.3%	55.2%	54.4%	54.3%	53.1%	52.3%	53.1%

This chart is provided for the purpose of illustration. The comparison is between special education expenditures for special education students and general fund budgets for all students.

The portion of the budget for all students that is not state share is comprised of local revenues (property taxes, non-levy revenues, and reappropriated monies). The portion of the expenditures for special education students refers only to earmarked appropriations.

Annual Performance Report

The Annual Performance Report (APR) for Grant Year July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003, was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in accordance with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The OSEP designed the APR to serve as a state's self-assessment and improvement planning document for the provision of services to students with disabilities in Montana schools (Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]). The document addresses five areas: general supervision, early childhood transition, parent involvement, free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment, and secondary transition. A full copy of the APR can be viewed on the OPI Web page at: http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/SpecED/data/AnnualPerfRpt.pdf.

The following tables and narrative provide a summary of the APR that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on March 31, 2004.

General Supervision

This section of the APR addresses general supervision procedures implemented by the Office of Public Instruction from July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003, to ensure that all eligible children with disabilities have an opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

General Supervision Procedures

These are procedures used by the OPI to identify and correct IDEA noncompliance in a timely manner.

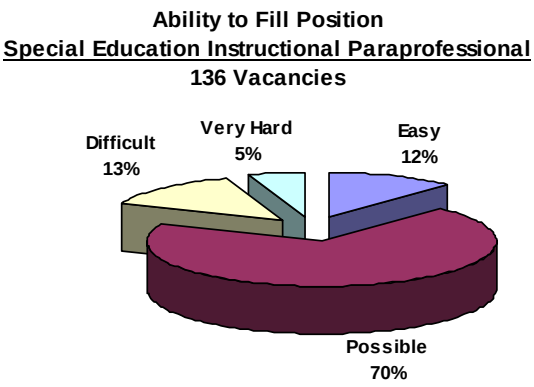
- School districts are monitored on a five-year cycle and state-operated and state-supported programs on a three-year cycle. During the reporting period, the OPI implemented a Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process that was results-oriented while still retaining components that ensured procedural compliance. When issues of noncompliance were identified, the district was required to establish timelines for correction, identify strategies it would use to ensure and sustain correction, and provide evidence of change. If a question arose over the provision of FAPE to a student, the district was required to take a specific corrective action within a timeline specified by the OPI. The OPI implemented a tracking system to ensure corrective actions were completed within the required timeframe(s) and provided technical assistance, as appropriate, to assist districts in making required changes. All districts that were monitored during the reporting period addressed compliance issues within the timelines required.
- The OPI's complaint, due process hearing, and mediation procedures ensure timely resolution of identified issues. A tracking system was implemented to ensure complaints and due process hearings are completed within the timeline requirements of the IDEA and data show that the OPI met those timeline requirements 100 percent of the time. Montana has a very low frequency of complaints and due process hearings (for the 2002-03 school year two mediations were held, there were three complaints that resulted in a final report, and no due process hearings were held). This is due to the effectiveness of the OPI's Early Assistance Program (EAP) and to the positive working relationships between Montana's parents and school personnel that allow them to resolve issues at the local level.

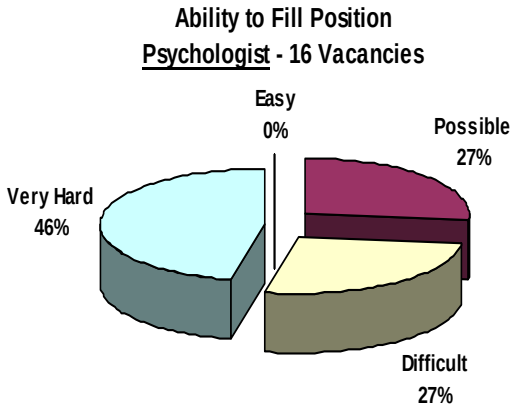
Special Education Personnel

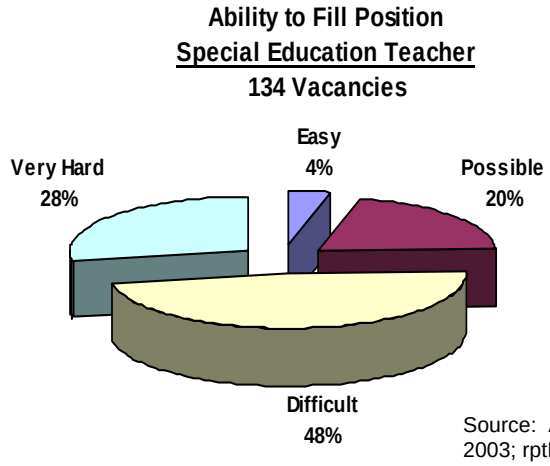
Montana continues to experience a large turnover in special education personnel that cannot be solely attributed to retirement. The ability to recruit and retain qualified special education personnel is a challenge. Factors influencing retention and recruitment of special education personnel include the remoteness of many Montana communities, required paperwork and meetings associated with special education, and salaries. In spite of the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel, Montana districts continue to provide special education services through a variety of delivery models and teaching strategies. The OPI addresses the shortage of qualified personnel through a number of approaches, including changes to licensure rules that allow for the acceptance of other state requirements for special education licensure in Montana; intern, outreach and mentoring programs; multiple trainings; regionalized or cooperative programs; qualified consultative and technical assistance services; and specific programs targeted at increasing the number of qualified special education providers. This past year, for the first time, the OPI collected statewide data on personnel vacancies and the ability to fill. The charts below look at vacancies that posed challenges to fill for the 2003-04 school year.

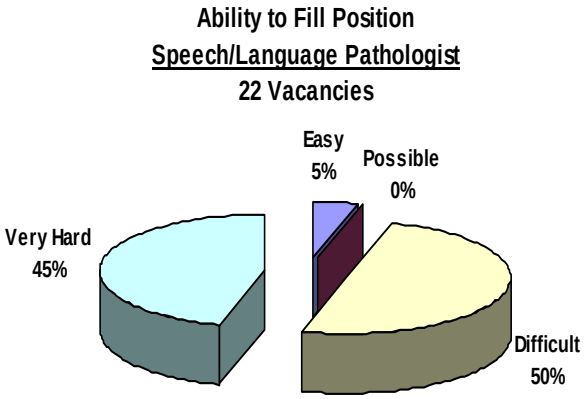
For purposes of these charts, the definition of the level of difficulty in filling a position is as follows:

EASY = several qualified applicants
POSSIBLE = some qualified applicants
DIFFICULT = shortage of applicants
VERY HARD = no applicants, not filled, or used emergency measures









Source: Annual Data Collection, October 2003; rptRecruitmentRetentionState

Timely and Accurate Reporting of Data

Montana has consistently met the U.S. Department of Education timelines for reporting data. The OPI has made substantial revisions to its special education data reporting process over the past three years and now provides school districts with the option of reporting data over the Internet. This has enhanced the accuracy of the data.

Early Childhood Transition

School districts are required to have a comprehensive child find system in place and to coordinate child find activities with Part C agencies (serving children ages 0 through 2), Headstart, and other provider programs to ensure an effective child find system. School districts work with Part C agencies to ensure a smooth transition from Part C on the child's third birthday, if appropriate, to special education services provided under Part B. Data show that the number of children who are two years old and are receiving services under Part C is less than the number of children who are three years old and receiving services under Part B. This discrepancy may be due to a variety of reasons, including parents not wanting their child to receive services until the age of three, lack of identification prior to the age of three, new children entering the state, and parents not wishing to participate in transition planning. There are currently no mechanisms for tracking children from Part C to Part B. There have been no findings of noncompliance related to the provision of FAPE on a child's third birthday or issues surrounding transition services from Part C to Part B.

Parent Involvement

The infrequency of due process hearing requests and formal complaints (generally initiated by parents) indicate that the majority of parents in Montana feel their children are receiving appropriate services. In addition, no corrective actions were issued through the continuous improvement monitoring process for 2002-03 that addressed issues of parent notification or participation in decisions of FAPE. The OPI works closely with school districts and the Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK) to help ensure parents of children with disabilities are knowledgeable of special education laws and rules and their role as parents in making special education decisions. The OPI staff is always available to answer questions that parents or school personnel may have.

Parents of children with disabilities are active members of the State Special Education Advisory Panel. As panel members, they serve in an advisory capacity and make recommendations to the OPI on parent involvement. Montana has a long-standing belief that the involvement of parents in educational decision making leads to better outcomes for students.

Free Appropriate Public Education In The Least Restrictive Environment

It is the goal of the OPI that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment that promotes high-quality

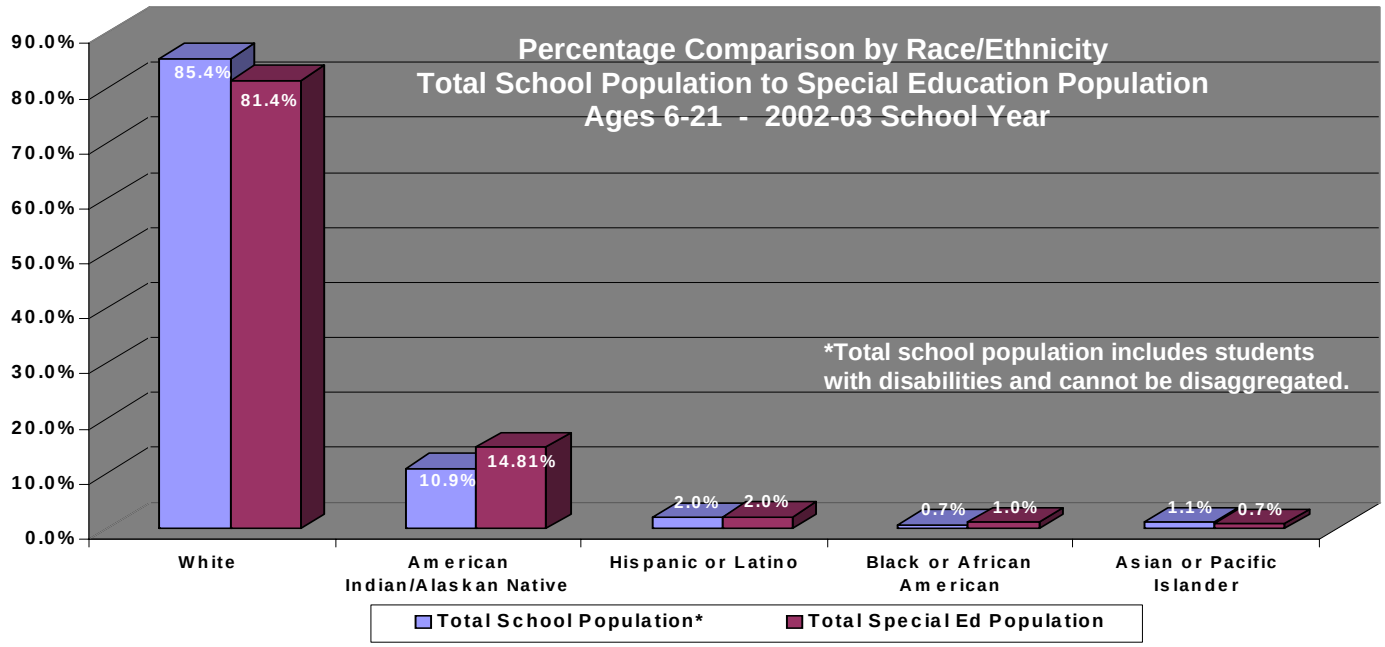
education and prepares them for employment and independent living. This is evidenced by measurable, continuous progress in academic skills and continuous successful participation in school, which results in increased graduation rates and decreased dropout rates, inclusion in the statewide assessment, and the ability to make successful school-to-adult transitions.

Disproportionality

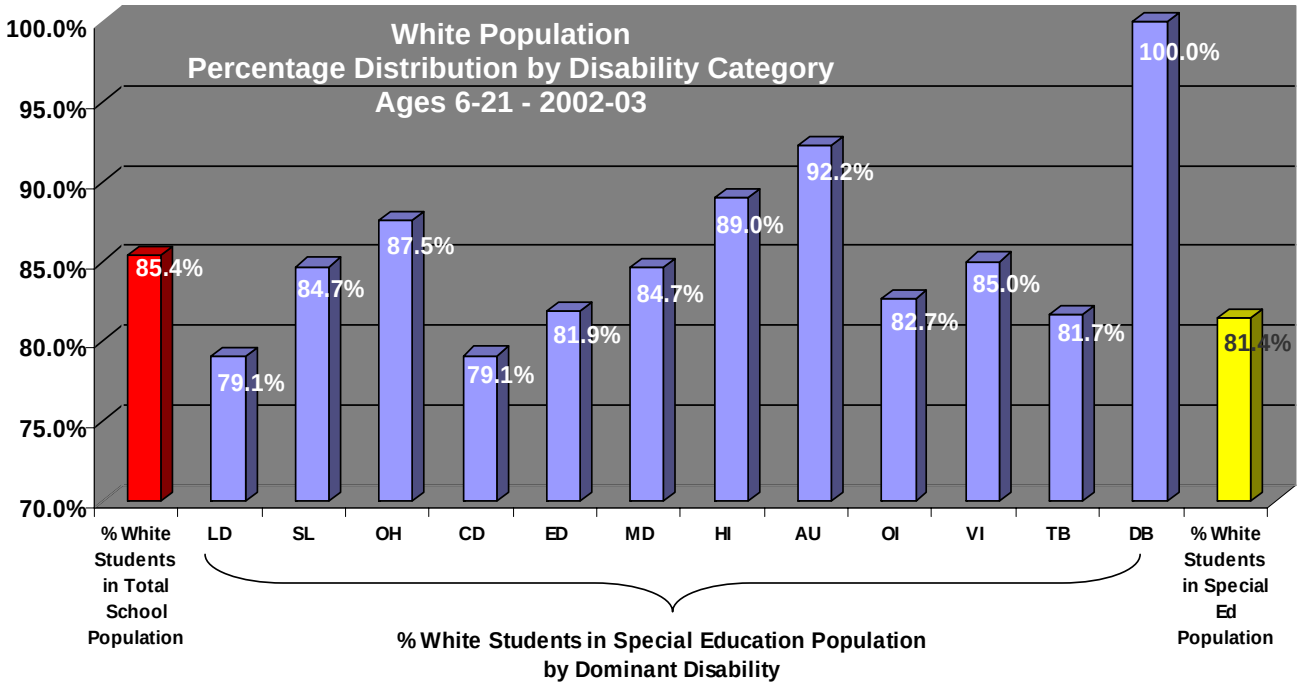
Disproportionality of students with disabilities by race/ethnicity is addressed based on a comparison of students with disabilities to total school enrollment. The APR looked at data over a three-year period. For purposes of this summary, the following charts will show data from the last year of that three-year period (2002-2003).

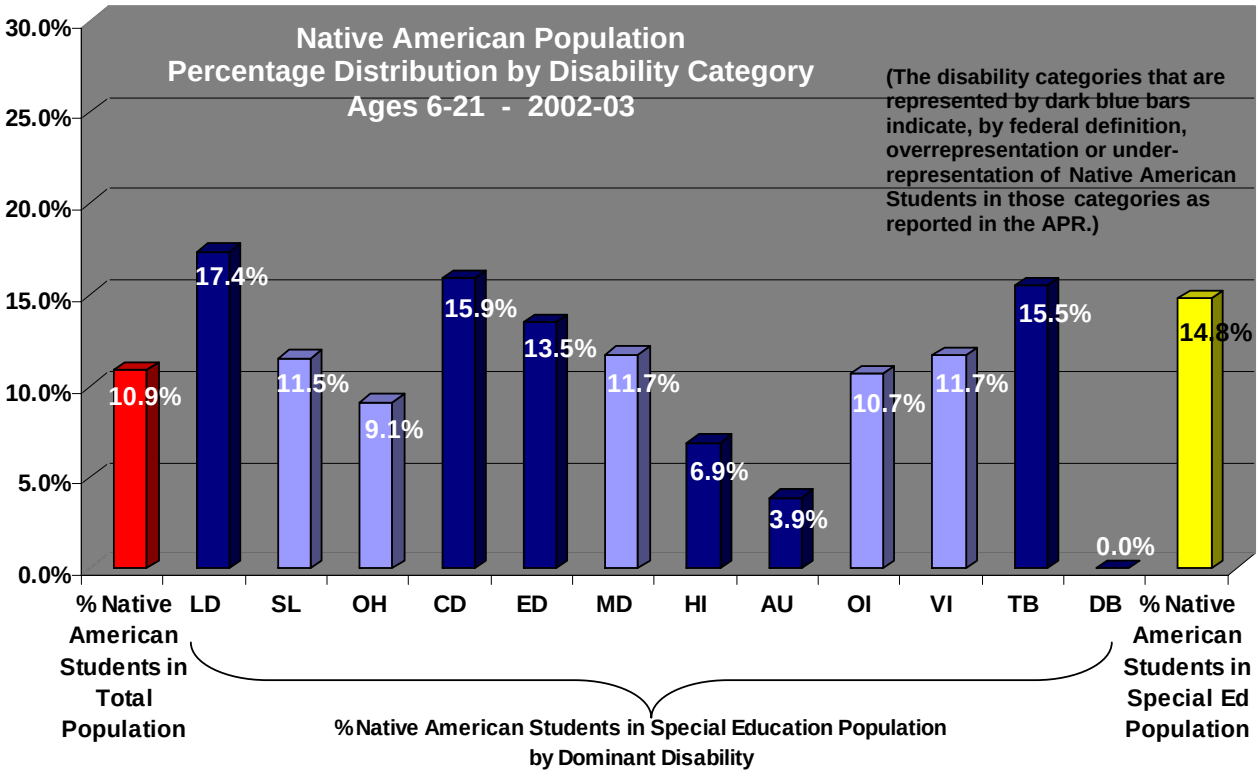
As indicated in the chart below, the proportion of American Indian students identified as students with disabilities is higher than the American Indian student proportionate representation in the total school enrollment. Trend data show that there has, over the past three years, been a consistent decrease in the proportionate percentage of American Indian students served in special education. The decrease in the numbers of American Indian students served in special education is probably due to multiple factors, including, but not limited to, an increase in the availability of readiness programs such as Headstart and preschool for children with disabilities, early reading and language programs, and personnel development programs that have focused on differentiated instruction, and positive behavior interventions.

A review of school district procedures and practices as part of the continuous improvement monitoring process helps to ensure that identification and placement decisions are race/ethnic neutral. Beginning in school year 2004-2005, the OPI will implement a focused intervention system of monitoring that incorporates a review of disproportionality data at the school district level and incorporates the data into decisions on who to monitor and what to focus on.



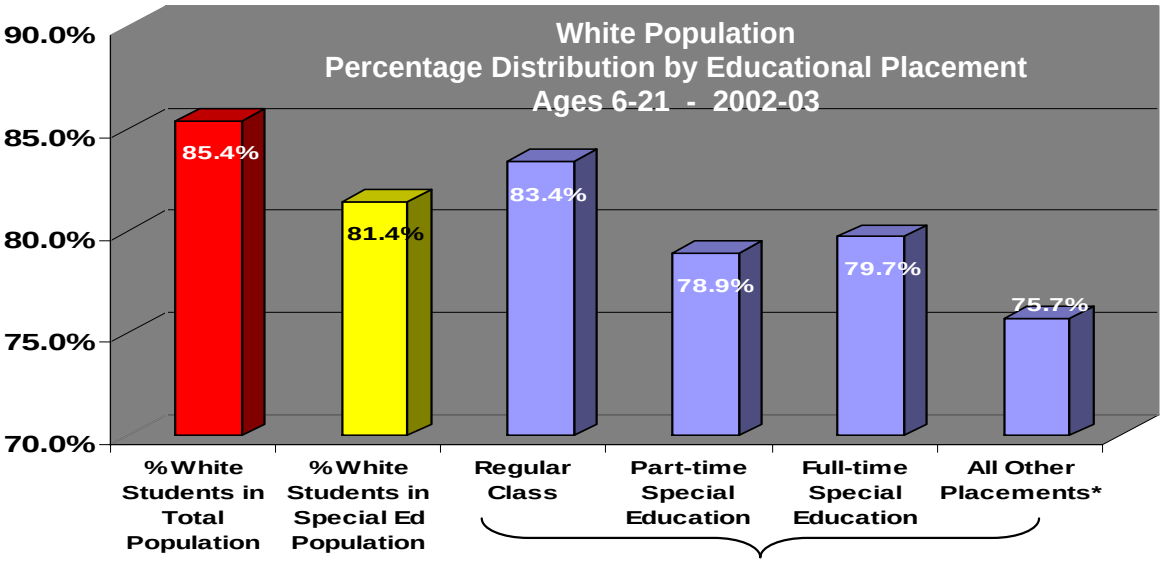
The following charts show the percentage distribution by disability category for White students and for American Indian students. Other race/ethnic groups (Hispanic, Black, Asian) constitute such a small population in Montana that, *although data may suggest a discrepancy, the numbers are too small to be statistically significant.* In addition, low-incidence disability categories (e.g., Autism [AU], Deaf/Blindness [DB]) may also indicate a discrepancy where none exists because of the small numbers involved.





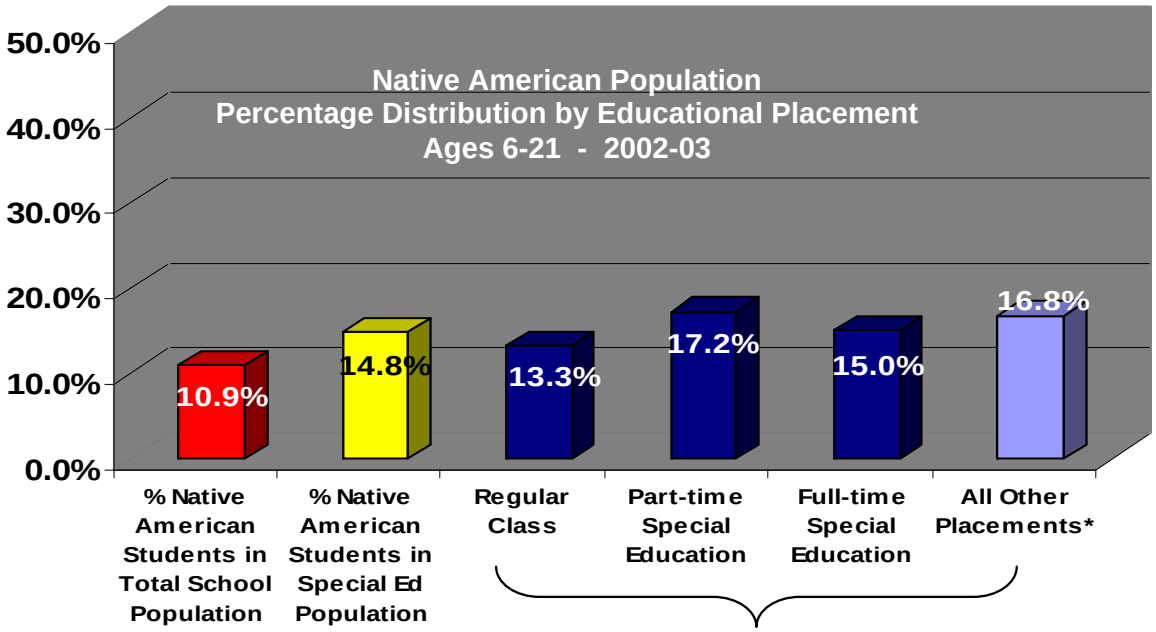
See page 4 for a definition of disability codes.

The charts below show the percentage distribution by Educational Placement for White students and American Indian students. Other race/ethnic groups (Hispanic, Black, Asian) constitute such a small population in Montana that, *although data may suggest a discrepancy, the numbers are too small to be statistically significant.*



***All Other Placements include: Public Separate Facility, Private Separate Facility, Public Residential Facility, Private Residential Facility and Homebound/ Hospital.**

% White Students in the Special Education Population by Educational Placement



***All Other Placements include: Public Separate Facility, Private Separate Facility, Public Residential Facility, Private Residential Facility and Homebound/ Hospital.**

(The educational placement categories that are represented by dark blue bars indicate, by federal definition, overrepresentation or under-representation of Native American Students in those categories as reported in the APR.)

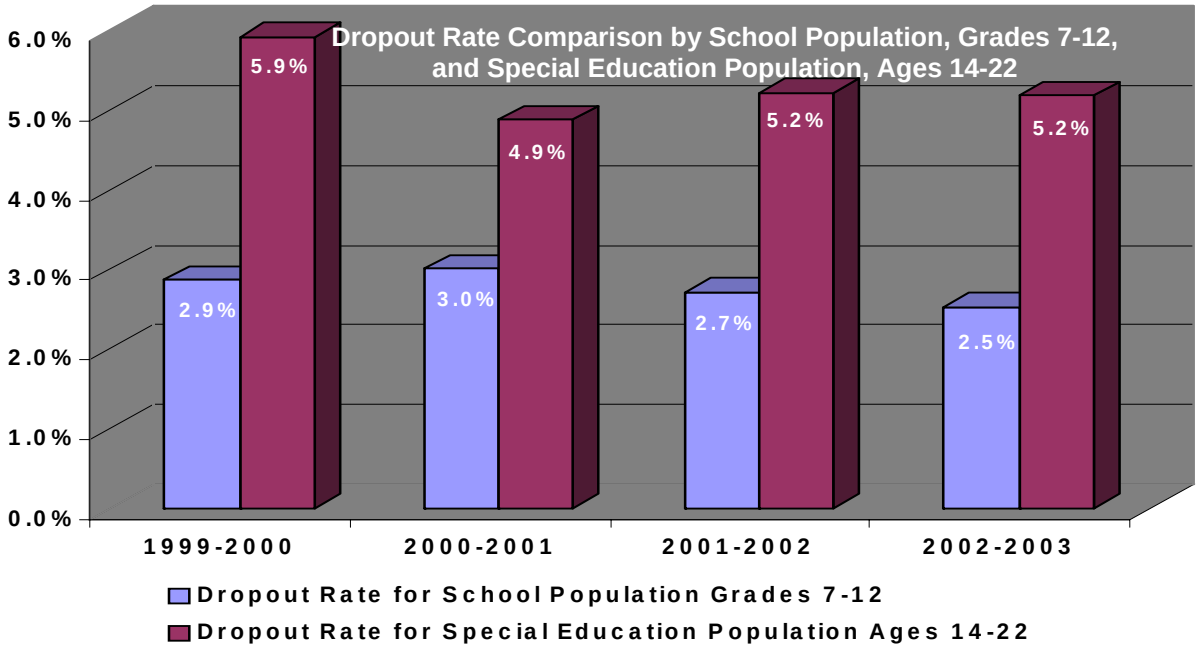
% Native American Students in the Special Education Population by Educational Placement

High school dropout rates and graduation rates for children with disabilities are compared to dropout rates and graduation rates for all children in accordance with federal requirements in the APR. This comparison creates some problems for Montana in several ways that are noted below. The charts below provide a look at the data that were submitted in the APR.

Dropout Rates

There are a number of problems in comparing dropout rates in the total school population and dropout rates in the special education school population. These problems are, for the most part, the result of federal requirements for reporting the data:

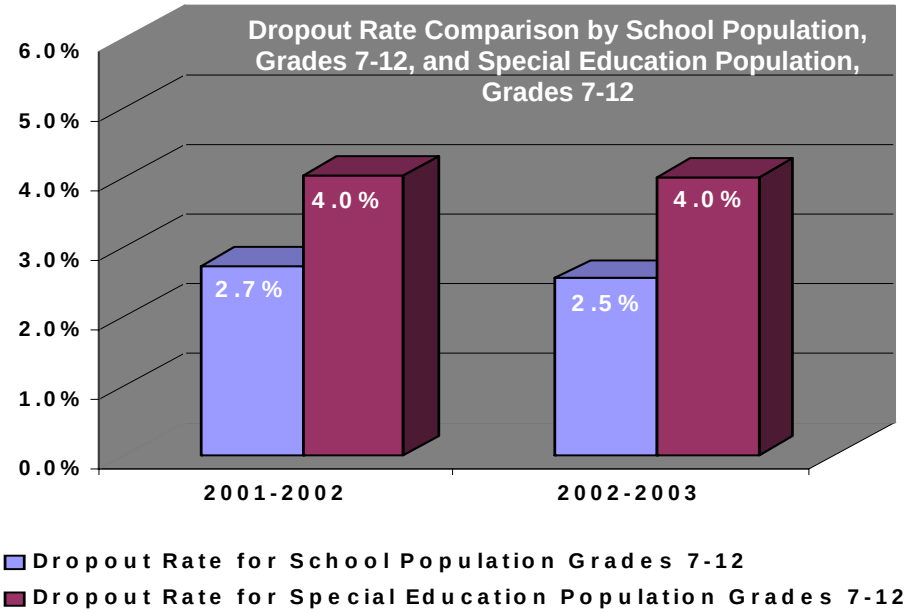
- The dropout data for the school population and for special education are collected separately and at different times of the year;
- The definitions used for the term "dropout" are different for each data collection;
- The dropout data collected for the school population includes students for both general education and special education and cannot be disaggregated out; and
- The dropout data collected from the school population includes students in grades 7-12, while the dropout data collected from the special education population includes students ages 14-22.



Dropout Rate for school population = all dropouts divided by total school population, grades 7-12;

Dropout Rate for special education population = dropouts who are students with disabilities divided by total students with disabilities, ages 14-22.

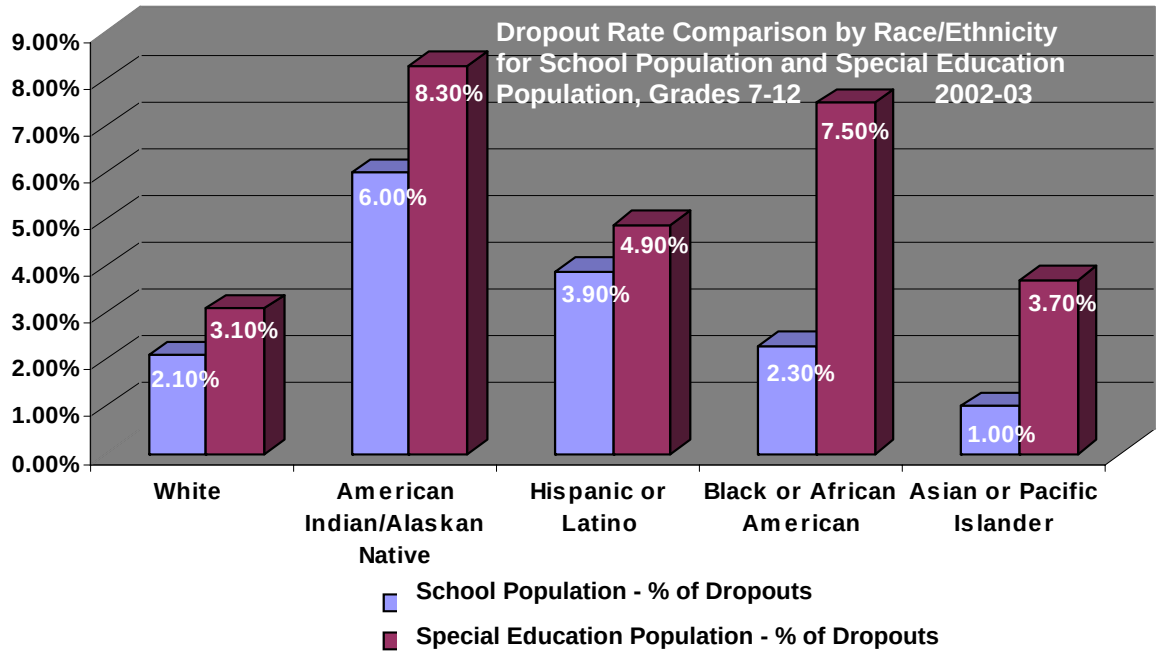
Another way of calculating dropout rates for students with disabilities that is more comparable to the calculation of dropout rates for the school population is to use grades 7-12 for both data sets. There are only two years of data for comparison using this method because the collection of special education student data by grade level began in December of 2001.



Dropout Rate for school population = all dropouts divided by total school population, grades 7-12;

Dropout Rate for special education population = dropouts who are students with disabilities divided by total students with disabilities, grades 7-12.

Dropout rate comparison by race/ethnicity uses school population for grades 7-12 and special education population for grades 7-12. The chart shows rate comparison for 2002-03 school year. (Problems with the data comparison include: dropout data for the school population and for special education population are collected separately and at different times of the year; definitions used for the term "dropout" are different for each data collection; and dropout data collected for the school population include students for both general education and special education and cannot be disaggregated out.)



For the small minority groups (Hispanic, Black, Asian), the dropout count numbers are relatively low causing a wide variation in the dropout rates between the school population and the special education population. This variation may suggest a discrepancy where, in fact, the numbers are too small to be statistically significant.

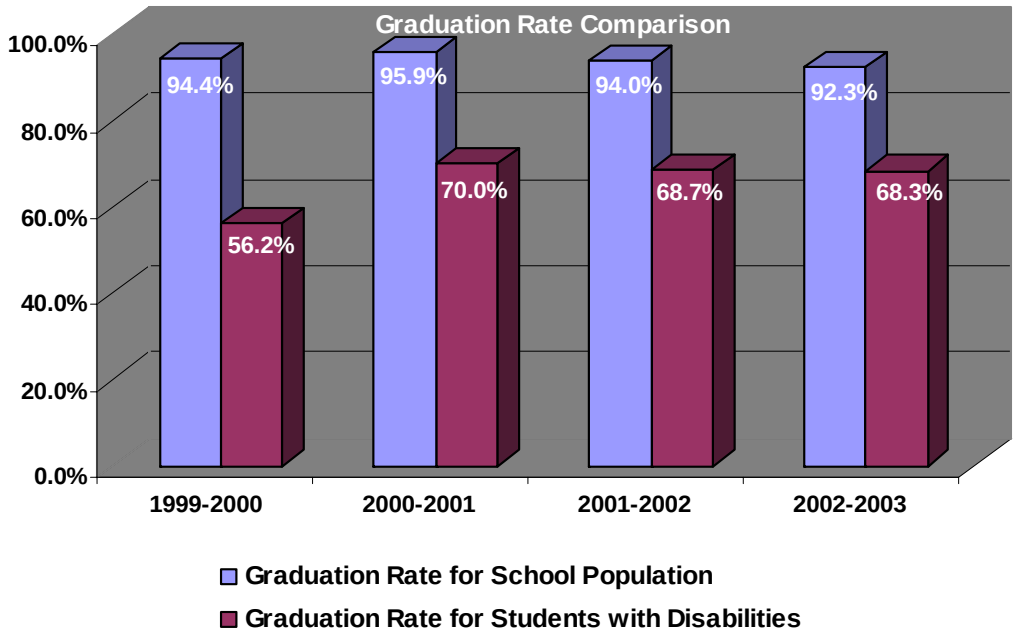
The data show that:

- Students with disabilities dropout at a higher rate than the general student population;
- The percent of students with disabilities who are reported to have dropped out of school remains at the same level as in 2001-2002; and
- American Indian students dropout at a rate higher than any other race/ethnic group.

Graduation Rates

There are a number of problems in comparing graduation rates in the school population and graduation rates in the special education population. Some of these problems are the result of federal requirements for reporting the data:

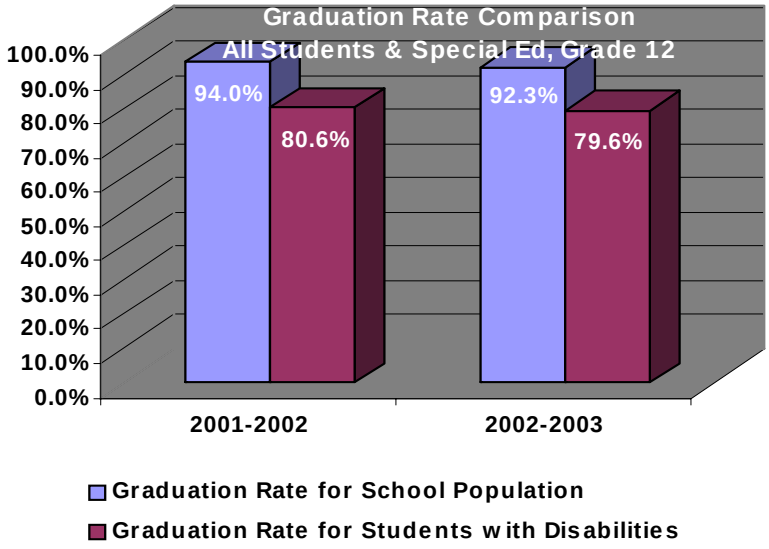
- The school population is reported separately from the special education population and at different times;
- The graduation data collected for the school population includes students for both general education and special education and cannot be disaggregated out;
- The method for calculating graduation rate for school population is significantly different from the method used for the special education population; and
- The school population uses grade 12 for the calculation and the special education population uses ages 14-21 for the calculation.



Graduation Rate for school population = graduates divided by 12th grade enrollment for school population.

Graduation rate for students with disabilities = graduates who are students with disabilities divided by special education school leavers (school leavers include students with disabilities, ages 14-21, who leave school by graduation, certificate, dropped out, died, or reached maximum age).

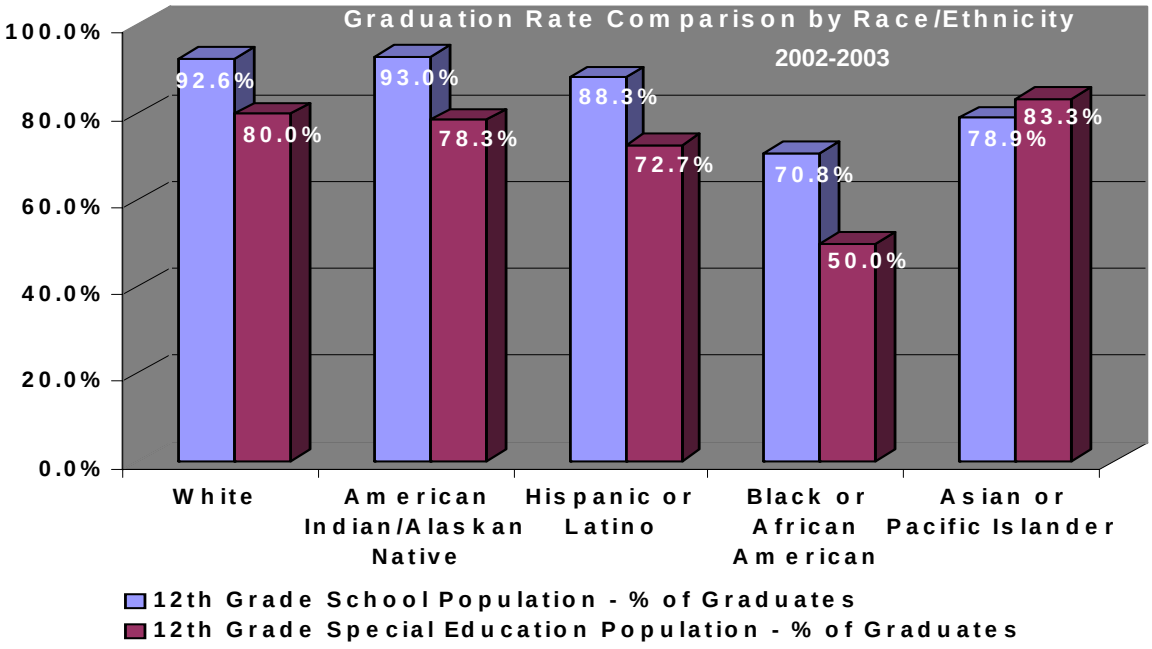
Another way of calculating graduation rates for students with disabilities that is more comparable to the calculation of graduation rates for general education is to use grade 12 for both data sets. There are only two years of data for comparison using this method because the collection of special education student data by grade level began in December of 2001.



Graduation rate for school population = graduates divided by 12th grade enrollment for school population.

Graduation rate for students with disabilities = graduates who are students with disabilities divided by students with disabilities in grade 12.

Graduation rate comparison by race/ethnicity uses school population for grade 12 and special education population for grade 12. The chart shows rate comparison for 2002-03 school year. (Problems with the data comparison include: school population is reported separately from the special education population and at different times, and graduation data collected for the school population includes students for both general education and special education and cannot be disaggregated out.)



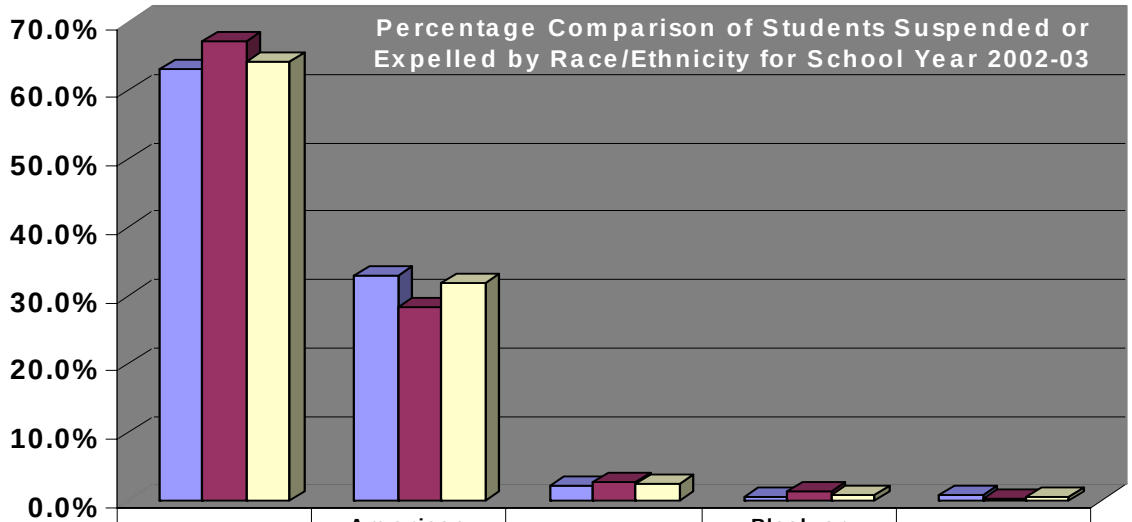
The data show that:

- The graduation rate for students with disabilities continues to be significantly lower than the rate for the general school population; and
- The graduation rate for American Indian students in 2002-2003 was higher than the graduation rate for American Indian students in 2001-2002.

As part of their Five-Year Comprehensive Educational Plan, school districts were required to review demographic data that included dropout and graduation rates for both the general education and special education populations, and address any issues that were determined to be problem areas. The OPI has implemented strategies to assist school districts in addressing these issues. These strategies are assigned to incorporate self-assessment and school improvement activities targeted to improve student outcomes.

Suspension/Expulsion Rates

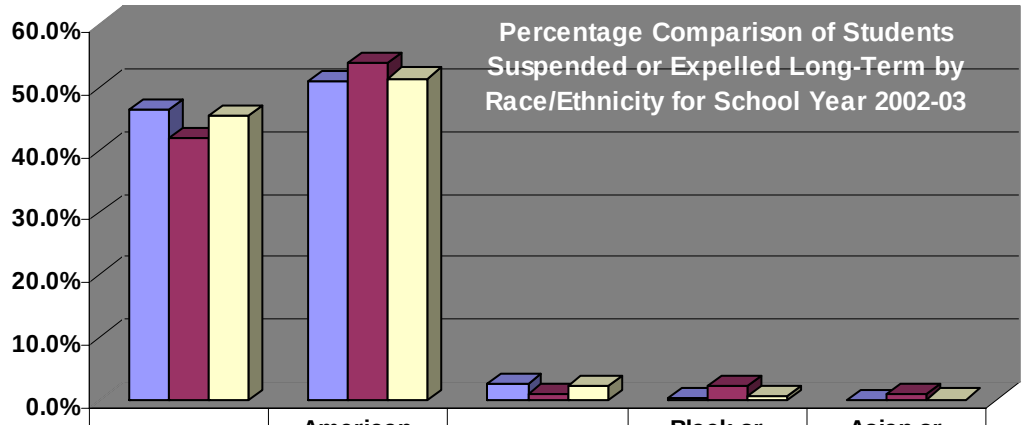
Suspension and expulsion rates for students with disabilities are compared to suspension and expulsion rates for nondisabled students. The OPI application that collects suspension and expulsion data from school districts collects all data for both general education and special education children and can be disaggregated. This application was developed and first used for data collecting in the 2002-03 school year. Because the data collection process was revised, it is not possible to compare data to previous years with any validity or reliability.



	White	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American	Asian or Pacific Islander
General Education	63.2%	33.0%	2.3%	0.7%	0.8%
Special Education	67.3%	28.2%	2.8%	1.3%	0.3%
All Students	64.1%	31.9%	2.4%	0.9%	0.7%

The APR requires data on students suspended or expelled for more than 10 days during the school year for a single incident or for multiple incidents summing to more than 10

days (long-term suspension/expulsion). The following table shows data on long-term suspensions/expulsions by race/ethnicity.



	White	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American	Asian or Pacific Islander
General Education	46.3%	50.9%	2.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Special Education	41.9%	53.8%	1.1%	2.2%	1.1%
All Students	45.5%	51.4%	2.3%	0.6%	0.2%

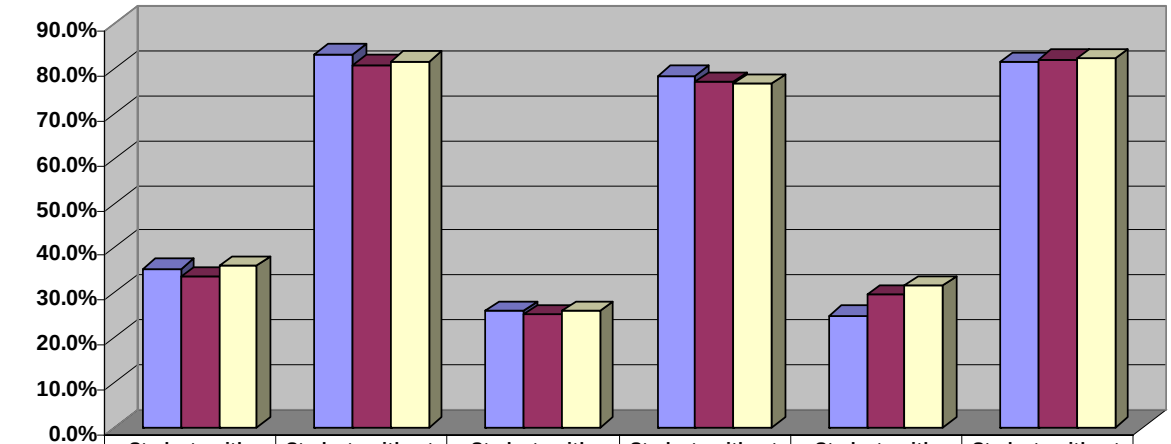
The data show that:

- Special education students subjected to long-term suspension/expulsion represent about .5 percent of the total special education child count;
- The rate of suspensions/expulsions for American Indian students is higher than the rate of white students; and
- Of the total number of students (unduplicated count) who were suspended or expelled for any reason, 77.3 percent were general education students and 22.7 percent were special education students.

Statewide Assessments (ITBS/ITED)

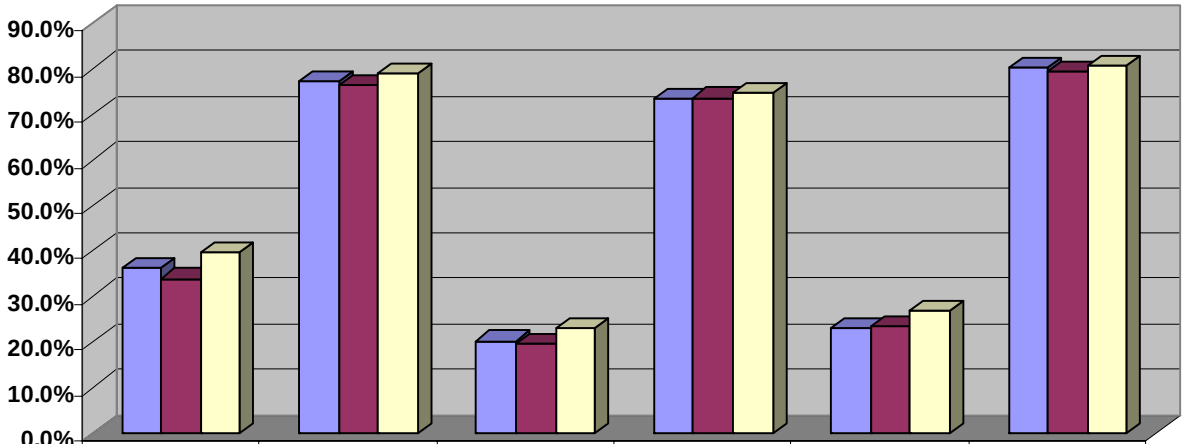
All students in public schools in Montana are required to participate in state-level assessments. In cases where a student took a portion of the test (ITBS/ITED) with a nonstandard accommodation, the student was also required to participate in the alternate assessment for the same content area. If a student with a disability was unable to participate in the test, even with accommodations, the student was given the Montana Alternate Assessment Scale. Because Montana does not exempt students from testing, it is estimated that at least 95 percent of students with disabilities participated in the statewide assessment.

READING - Percentage of Students Scoring in Proficient and Advance Performance Categories - Three-Year Comparison (2000-2003)



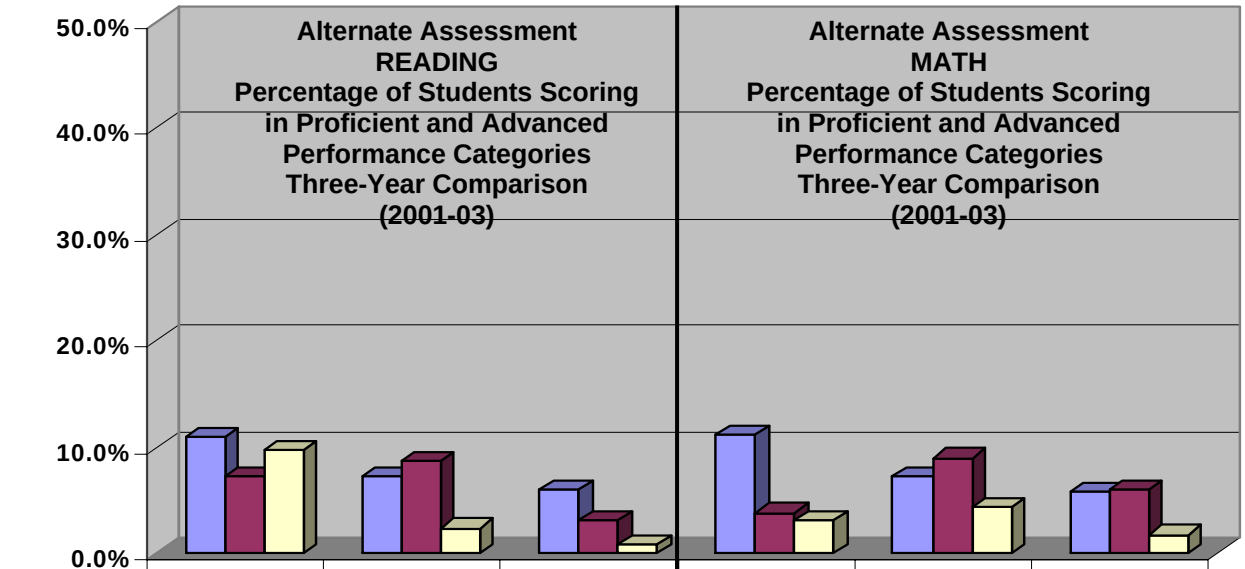
	Students with Disabilities Grade 4	Students without Disabilities Grade 4	Students with Disabilities Grade 8	Students without Disabilities Grade 8	Students with Disabilities Grade 11	Students without Disabilities Grade 11
2000-01	35.4%	83.3%	25.8%	78.4%	24.9%	814%
2001-02	33.6%	80.8%	25.1%	77.0%	29.5%	819%
2002-03	36.0%	816%	25.8%	76.6%	315%	82.2%

MATH - Percentage of Students Scoring in Proficient and Advance Performance Categories - Three-Year Comparison (2000-2003)



	Students with Disabilities Grade 4	Students without Disabilities Grade 4	Students with Disabilities Grade 8	Students without Disabilities Grade 8	Students with Disabilities Grade 11	Students without Disabilities Grade 11
2000-01	36.1%	77.1%	20.3%	73.5%	23.1%	80.4%
2001-02	33.9%	76.4%	19.6%	73.6%	23.3%	79.5%
2002-03	39.7%	78.8%	23.1%	74.7%	26.8%	80.8%

Alternate Assessment



	Reading - Grade 4	Reading - Grade 8	Reading - Grade 11	Math - Grade 4	Math - Grade 8	Math - Grade 11
2000-01	11.0%	7.3%	6.0%	11.1%	7.3%	5.9%
2001-02	7.2%	8.8%	3.2%	3.9%	9.0%	6.1%
2002-03	9.7%	2.4%	0.9%	3.1%	4.3%	1.8%

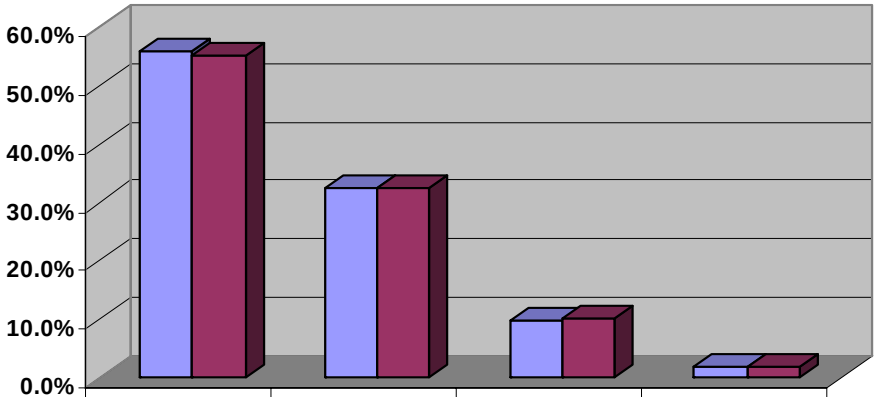
There continues to be a large gap between the academic performance of students with disabilities and students without disabilities. In an effort to close this gap, Montana has implemented strategies such as extensive training on access to the general curriculum to regular and special education teachers, with focus on teacher preparation for differentiated instruction; intensive training to teachers on reading instruction; five-year comprehensive education plans that incorporate strategies for improving instruction and student outcomes in reading and math content areas; and coordination at the state level between special education staff and elementary and secondary education staff in reviewing adequate yearly progress of students with disabilities on statewide assessments.

Educational Placement

Ages 6-22

In the area of educational placement, over 55 percent of students with disabilities, ages 6-22, receive their special education and related services in the regular classroom setting.

Percentage of Special Education Population, Ages 6-21, by Educational Placement Two-Year Comparison (2002 and 2003)



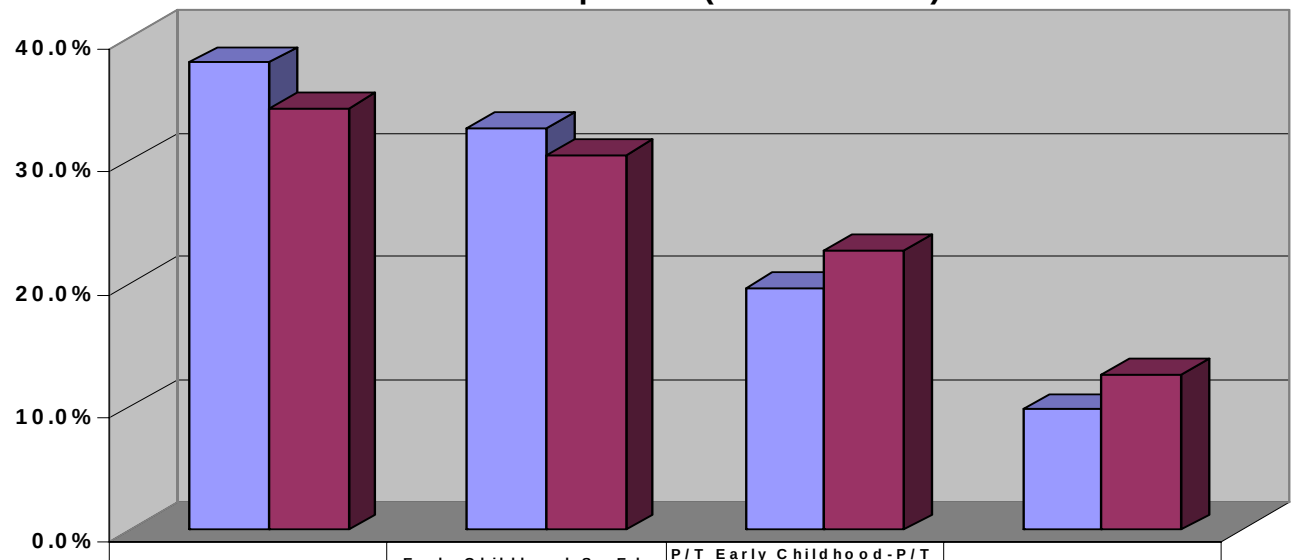
	Regular Class	Part-time Special Education	Full-time Special Education	All Other Placements*
2001-02	55.9%	32.4%	9.9%	1.8%
2002-03	55.0%	32.7%	10.3%	2.0%

***All Other Placements include: Public Separate Facility, Private Separate Facility, Public Residential Facility, Private Residential Facility and Homebound/Hospital.**

Ages 3-5

An analysis of data for preschool students (ages 3-5), shows that the majority of students (over 65 percent) receive their special education services either in an early childhood setting or a part-time early childhood/part-time special education setting. Because Montana does not provide publicly funded early childhood programs, students in the more rural areas of the state are more likely to receive services in a special education preschool setting.

Percentage of Special Education Population, Ages 3-5, By Educational Placement Two-Year Comparison (2002 and 2003)



	Early Childhood Setting	Early Childhood Sp Ed Setting	P/T Early Childhood-P/T Early Childhood Sp Ed Setting	All Other Placements*
2001-02	37.9%	32.7%	19.6%	9.8%
2002-03	34.2%	30.4%	22.7%	12.7%

***All Other Placements include: Early Childhood Sp Ed Setting, Home, Residential Facility, Separate School, Itinerant Service Outside the Home, and Reverse mainstream.**

Secondary Transition

Montana has made significant progress in preparation of students with disabilities for secondary transition. Five years ago, Montana was one of the first states in the country to spearhead an initiative to help schools improve secondary transition planning for students with disabilities through the Transition Outcomes Project. The project started in two pilot school districts in the state and has since increased to include over 50 school districts. This project provides a model for helping IEP team members identify and meet transition service requirements and determine if improvements have been made.

- School personnel and service providers have an increased awareness of the components of the transition requirements and practices.
- A Transition Web page is operating through the Montana State University-Billings site (http://www.msubillings.edu/transition) to assist personnel in learning more about best practices, and resources. This is funded through the OPI's State Improvement Grant.
- Transition training and materials are widely available through multiple formats and are accessed and utilized by students, parents, school personnel and service providers.
- The OPI works in collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation, the Institutions of Higher Education, and other programs to help ensure successful transitions for students with disabilities.
- Montana does not have a coordinated statewide system to collect post-secondary school outcome data.